

G-2 REPORT

4-1 RE 2657-L-76

WAS DELETED

SUBJECT POLITICAL---ARGENTINA

(FOR INFORMATION DIGEST-)

From ARGENTINA

No. 3504 Date September 10, 1925

Replying to No. Date OCT 1 1925

3510: Suffrage---National and

Local.

The present national electoral law was sanctioned in 1913 which authorized all native and naturalized male citizens above the age of 18 years of age to vote.

This national electoral law is based on the principle of universal and secret suffrage, and has been adopted more or less in the provinces in their local elections. Similarly the municipalities have followed this example.

The government control over free suffrage is similar to that of any other government. It exercises pressure through patronage, through its agents and tries to win elections.

For the settlement of suffrage disputes, the constitution provides that the Federal Government has the right to intervene in provinces and territories in order to guarantee a Republican form of Government. This right can be exercised by the President when Congress is not in session. Whenever election frauds occur in provinces this right is freely exercised.

The tendency in elections today is to accept the decision of the voters at the polls. Thus we see in the Federal Capital sometimes a socialist majority, and at other times a Radical or some faction of the Radical Party majority.

Binding Margin.

3510.

4-1 2657 276 JUN 14
SUGGESTIONS
CAGS

Suffrage - National and Local

(a) Exercise of Suffrage

In Argentina the right of suffrage is extended to all native and naturalized citizens over the age of eighteen years, with the following exceptions:-

- (a) Foreigners, minors under eighteen years, women, and those not registered.
- (b) Mentally deficient and imbeciles who are not able to read and write.
- (c) Members of religious orders.
- (d) Soldiers and police agents.
- (e) Those who have been sentenced by a competent judge to be deprived of their political rights.

The ballot is secret and compulsory. Each voter on registering is given a ticket, which is checked at time of voting, against the Electoral registers of the different Electoral Sections. The votes are written on white paper and deposited by the voter in a ballot box called "Urna Electoral".

The ballot boxes are locked with two different keys. One is kept by the Chairman of the Board of Election Inspectors, and the other by a member of the board elected by a majority of the members. The counting of the votes is done twice. Once at the place where the election is held, and a second time after the election, in the presence of the people, at headquarters of the Electoral District.

Supervision and Control of Election Methods:

The chief of the election district, or the Governor of the state in the case of presidential electors and national Deputies, publishes the names of the successful candidates but the validity of the election is passed upon by the Chamber of Deputies in the first case, and the Congress assembled in the second.

The registry books are kept open for one month, and during that time any charges can be made against the qualifications of the names of persons appearing on the register; such charges are heard by the district Federal Judge, and his decision is final. During the elections no one is admitted in the polls except the election inspectors, selected by lot from the qualified voters, and a representative from each of the political parties. The voters enter one at a time to cast their vote. The police are given unlimited authority in protection of the ballot boxes and to quell any riot or disorder.

In an effort to prevent illegal elections the Chairman of the board of election inspectors of the section, and the head of the electoral district are not allowed to vote.

The Governor of the district, as the Governor of the Province must receive protests or complaints and remit them to the Chamber of Deputies or Assembled Congress as the case may be.

In order to assure that the vote is spontaneous and a free act of the voter, the law has prescribed that soldiers cannot vote. While soldiers are permitted to vote the law specifically states: that they shall not remain in the vicinity of the polls longer time than that necessary to cast their vote, they shall not be found in rooms with civilians during the elections, or use their authority in any manner in favor of one of the candidates. The number of police permitted near the polls will be only those required to preserve order. They are not permitted to vote, a severe punishment is prescribed for any attempt to use their official position to aid any candidate.

The law further prohibits the calling together of reserves, or manoeuvres in which the reserves take part during eight months previous to the elections of President. No one is permitted the use of arms in the vicinity of the elections, and each voter must prove his identity before he is permitted to vote. The law classifies as a crime any attempt to vote under a false name.

The provinces have all adopted the Federal System of voting with hardly any change. All provinces have passed a law guaranteeing the exercise of universal suffrage with the Federal limitations, and with fines and punishments tending to assure elections against fraud and violence.

In actual practice all the above provisions of the law are not strictly complied with. The violation of these laws is punished, but as a general rule with small fines, and the violation of election laws is not looked upon as a crime by the people. In recent elections in Mendoza, in the current month, one party thinking that they had been defeated at the polls, sent in a mob of some ten or fifteen men firing pistols. It was claimed that this was an attempt to steal the ballot boxes. Order was restored without any loss of life, or loss of ballot boxes. As far as I have been able to learn from the newspapers no action was taken against the offenders. Such occurrences are not unusual, and during the previous administration such acts were used as an excuse by President Irigoyen to intervene and put his friends into power.

(b) Agencies for Settlement of Election Disputes.

In the national elections where the presidential electors and national deputies are elected as stated above, the Assembled Congress and the Chamber of Deputies are the judges of their own elections. They receive and pass upon all protests made against a candidate.

Any election disputes arising in the different provinces, involving parties against the National Power, always raise a cry for Federal Intervention. This was used many times during the previous administration, and it is claimed by the enemies of Irigoyen that he used election disputes as an excuse to put his friends into power in the different provinces, as intervenors.

(c) National Tendencies towards Legal Acceptance of Electoral Results.

During the present administration there has been very little dispute or dissension from election results that reached a degree other than of a very minor importance. The National tendency is

to cry for intervention, and if no action is taken in the matter,
in short time the disapproval, and nothing more is heard of
it.

Election dissensions have never gone further than to necessi-
tate Federal Intervention, and in the course of a few months have
been settled.

Details of Federal Intervention are given in 3410.

Source:

Civica by Gonzalez Fernandez
Prensa - Newspaper - Dr. J. J. Calich

Report No. 3786

Buenos Aires, April 28th, 1927.

C. T. Richardson
C. T. Richardson
Major G. S. M. A.

ARGENTINA-----POLITICAL

Subject: Suffrage - National and Local:

(a) Exercise of Suffrage:

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ARGENTINA-----POLITICAL

Subject: Suffrage - National and Local:

(a) Exercise of Suffrage: (Contd.)

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(b) Agencies for Settlement of Election Disputes:

In the national elections where the presidential

ARGENTINA-----POLITICAL

Subject: Suffrage - National and Local:

(b) Agencies for Settlement of Election Disputes: (Contd.)

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(c) National Tendencies towards Legal Acceptance of Electoral Results:

During the present administration there has been very little dispute or dissension from election results that reached a degree other than of a very minor importance. The National tendency is to cry for intervention, and if no action is taken in the matter, in a short time the dispute dies, and nothing more is heard of it.

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Details of Federal Intervention are given in 3410.

Source:

Civics by Gonzalez Fernandez
Prensa - Newspaper - Dr. Jascovich.

Ch. J. Jascovich
From L.A. Argentina.

Report No. 3786

April 28, 1927.

ARGENTINA (Political)

Subject: Suffrage - National and Local

(a) Exercise of Suffrage RECEIVED G/2 W. D. NOV 1 1930

Criticism levelled during the week-end of September 27th. at the Provisional Government's reported intention to introduce modifications into the National Constitution is premature, according to the Minister of the Interior.

Dr. Sanchez Sorondo stated on September 28th. that the critics had based their comments on misinterpreted statements made outside of Government House. The real views of the Government and its immediate intentions would be fully and clearly revealed in a manifesto to be published over the signature of General Uriburu. The Minister of the Interior has assured Dr. Ortiz Pereyra, one of the men at the head of the movement to reorganize the Radical Party in all parts of the country that the Provisional Government would comply with the Saenz Peña law and the constitution in spirit and in letter. The members of the Provisional Government had taken oath to do so on September 8th., and they had no intention of going back on their pledge to the people.

Before leaving the Ministry of the Interior, the Radical leader assured Dr. Sanchez Sorondo that all the more conspicuous members of the party were with the Provisional Government, and would do all that lay in their power to facilitate its task. He asked finally that the Radicals now held in gaol on trivial charges should be released as early as possible, the Minister giving the understanding that they would not be kept a single moment longer than was necessary to disprove the charges against them.

On October 1st. the Provisional Government issued the following manifesto:

"The categorical declarations formulated in the manifesto published by us on the day of the revolution, together with the solemn oath taken by the members of the Provisional Government in the presence of the people on September 8 appear to make it unnecessary for us to ratify at this early date the ideals animating the Executive Power in the work of reconstruction to which it has set itself.

But the understandable impatience of certain political parties, and above all, the circumstances that they have invoked promises which we never made, and words we never uttered, have decided us to break our silence, and to interrupt momentarily, for the purpose, the first and most urgent task expected of us by the people: the reorganization of the administrative offices of State.

ARGENTINA (Political)

Subject: Suffrage - National and Local

(a) Exercise of Suffrage

In addressing ourselves once again to the people, the only sovereign power in the country, we do so in the fear that public opinion may otherwise be misled, intentionally or otherwise, by the adversaries of the revolution, or by those who have not yet been able to comprehend its full significance.

One interest, and one only, has moved and continues to move us: the interest of the nation. Therefore, party interests, however laudable and respectable they may be, must be subordinated to this major interest.

The political parties forming the Opposition to the deposed Government, whose efficient collaboration in the revolutionary movement merits public applause, participated in that movement because their leaders were in the ranks of the revolutionaries. They are not bound in any way to the Provisional Government, which is maintained in power by its respect for the laws of the country and the Constitution. The Provisional Government will continue in this attitude of respect and will submit all changes of a fundamental character to the will of the people through the medium of their legitimate representatives, when elected."

Referring to the newly-formed Alianza Federal Democratica, the manifesto continues:

"While it is true that these same parties have been able, in a given moment, to consolidate an important number of citizens, united in their desire to repudiate the former governing party, at the same time they do not constitute all national opinion. Their hopes, their words of counsel, their determinations, when properly expressed through their governing authorities, must be taken into consideration by the Provisional Government, and appreciated with the respect they merit. But it is also evident that the Provisional Government is obliged to consult, not merely the parties already organized, but also the opinion of the people of the entire Republic.

On the other hand, now that the motives which inspired thousands of citizens to give their votes to the only party that could challenge the supremacy of the official party have disappeared, it is necessary to know whether they are still disposed to abide by political groups upholding ideas and principles contrary to their own."

The foregoing refers, of course to the unprecedented support accorded to the Independent Socialist Party in Buenos

From M.A. Argentina

Report No. 4232

October 21, 1930

ARGENTINA (Political)

Subject: Suffrage - National and Local

(a) Exercise of Suffrage

at the elections last March.

"If the Government which has risen out of the revolution should limit itself to the substitution of the men in power, it would undoubtedly prove very popular indeed with the political parties favoured; but the revolution was not organised and carried out with electoral objects in view.

Above all party politics, we hold political views which we do not ask or compel anyone to share. Nevertheless, we must make them public in order that the people may know, consider, and discuss them.

The Government respects and will respect the views expounded to it by the various political parties, but it also wants to know the thoughts of the great mass of public opinion not allied to any political organisation.

If the people believe that, as a guarantee of democracy, and for the happiness of the Republic the Constitution and existing legislation should remain untouched; that it is sufficient that the happenings of the past few years shall not be repeated; that it will be sufficient to change the men in Government House - if the people think thus, then we shall accept their verdict; but we shall have established the degree of our responsibility for the benefit of posterity and for history.

We admit the existence of political groups and parties which consider institutional reform unnecessary, which are of opinion that our present political system is excellent (even though their experience of it may have been painful). But we think that the only way to ascertain whether the rest of the people share that view is by inviting them definitely to associate themselves with one or other of those parties, or to constitute a new party, national in character, which proclaims and sustains other ideas.

From this dissent or coincidence of ideas, in which we shall remain absolutely neutral, despite the frankness of our statement of views, we shall find out what the people want, and we shall bow to their decision.

We have given solemn assurance of our respect for the Constitution and for the fundamental laws under which the country is governed, and we

From M.A. Argentina .

Report No. 4232 October 21, 1930

ARGENTINA (Political)

Subject: Suffrage - National and Local

(a) Exercise of Suffrage

shall not depart from our principles for a single instant. But this does not - cannot - prevent us from meditating over the institutional problems of the hour, and the obligation to give ourselves over entirely to the consideration of the nation's difficulties.

We do not consider the Constitution or the fundamental laws of the country are perfect; but we declare that they cannot be reformed except by the means set forth in the Constitution itself.

Interpreting hopes expressed and made public by legislators, statesmen, and representative associations during a long period of years, we think it is necessary that the Constitution should be reformed in such a manner as to make possible the harmonisation of the tributary systems of the nation and the provinces; the effective autonomy of the federal states; the automatic functioning of Congress; the independence of the Judicial Power, leaving it free to make its own appointments; the perfection of the electoral system. We consider that when these interests can be made to gravitate effectively, repetition of the evils which gave rise to the revolution will become impossible. When the representatives of the people cease to be merely the representatives of political committees and workers, agriculturists, livestock breeders, professional men, and industrialists occupy all the seats in Congress, then, we believe, democracy will commence to be something more than a high-sounding and pretty word in the Argentine Republic.

But it will be Congress, elected under the Saenz Peña Law as it stands on the Statute Book at present that will declare the necessity for reforms, as outlined in Article 30 of the Constitution. The Provisional Government will accept and obey all the resolutions of Congress, because it considers Congress to be the depositary of national sovereignty.

Our word of honour not to permit the inclusion of our names in proposed future Governments, gives us freedom to tell the country what we honestly think, and the right to demand that there shall be absolute belief in our sincerity.

When we offered the country the guarantee of free elections at the earliest possible moment, we made a republican profession of faith; but we have not advanced our opinions regarding electoral systems or methods, although we propose to hand over the reins of government as soon as possible to those legally entitled to hold them.

ARGENTINA (Political)

Subject: Suffrage - National and Local

(a) Exercise of Suffrage

The Revolution was organized and carried into execution by men whose sole ambition was to save the country. These men have not and will not take an active part in any political party. If it is necessary, therefore, to listen to those who have had, and still have political interests to defend, it is impossible not to listen to the others as well. The country will say which point of view merits the greatest credit. We believe, therefore, that it is an unavailable patriotic duty for all independent persons entitled to the vote to associate themselves now with the party they favour most; to elect under existing legislation, the Congress to which the Government will submit the projected institutional reforms which will serve to guarantee the aims for which the revolution was organized.

Those who discuss the 'undemocratic attitude' and the 'perpetuation of the Provisional Government' and its preference for this or that political faction are therefore offering gratuitous insults to men who have no need to reiterate their word of honour once given spontaneously and to the entire nation. These men have shown their willingness to risk their lives and their peace for the good of their country. All they ask in return is the respect of their fellow-citizens."



From M.A. Argentina

Report No. 4232

October 21, 1930.

G-2 Report.

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PUBLICATION
SERVICE JOURNALS.

2657-176
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3510-a

ARGENTINA - Political.

Subject: Suffrage;
Exercise of Suffrage.

Reported changes in the qualifications for the right of suffrage in Argentina are being discussed in political circles and in the press, following the publication of the results in the presidential elections which were held on September 5th. Although the reports were more or less rumors at first they were given substance in a speech delivered by President Justo at a banquet of 2,000 civil servants on the evening of October 5th. This declaration of the President which outlined the establishment of a civil service without the right of suffrage may have had its inception in the results of the presidential election in the Capital where the opposition ticket polled a large majority. With a non-voting army of civil employees in office before the next election, six years hence, the stronghold of the opposition would likely be turned into a government camp.

Projected electoral reform does not, however, affect the secrecy of the vote although there has been opposition in some quarters to this provision of the Saens Peña law, notably in the Province of Buenos Aires where the Provincial Governor and other officials voted openly in the last elections.

It does, however, envisage the raising of the voting age from 18 to 22 as the former age is coming to be considered as hardly mature enough to warrant political judgment. Furthermore, the talked-of reform would impose a literacy qualification on voters. There has been much agitation for this qualification in the past as the higher type of citizen considers his vote should be more important in influencing the affairs of the country than that of an illiterate.

There was presented in the last Congress a bill for the creation of a civil service, which has never existed in Argentina, free from political influence. The point made by President Justo in his speech that this service should be still freer from political influence by having no voting rights raised an entirely new point.

Source: Buenos Aires Press.

Original & 1 copy airmailed October 8th.
Four copies by steamer October 9th.

LESTER B. BROWN, COLONEL
MILITARY ATTACHE

From M/A Argentina.

Report No. 5645.

October 6, 1937.

G-2 Report.

3,500

ARGENTINA - Political.

Subject: Political Rights;
Frauds in State Elections.

RECEIVED D. DEC 20 1939

Election frauds in state and national elections and the disregard of the Saenz Peña law which provides for universal suffrage (male) and the secret ballot are still common in Argentina. Only a few days ago the Federal Government issued a warning to the Governor of the Province of Catamarca on the eve of the provincial elections which was not heeded and the frauds perpetrated on that occasion were in the nature of a defiance of the authority of the President of the Republic. It is now possible that the National Government will declare the Catamarca elections void and will intervene in that province as it did recently in San Juan and Santiago del Estero. Whatever is done, or not done, in the case of Catamarca will, undoubtedly, affect the whole future trend of Argentine politics.

Going back to the situation in Argentina a few years ago, it is found that the Uriburu revolution of September 1930 was supported by a vast majority of the people on the understanding that political liberty and clean elections were to be restored, and that the excellent system established by the Saenz Peña law would be allowed to operate untrammelled in future.

Enthusiasm for the revolution was soon dampened however when General Uriburu declared himself openly anti-Democratic and proceeded to annul the elections in the Province of Buenos Aires in 1931. Under such a regime it was only natural that the people should not have been allowed a free hand in the election of the new president, General A.P. Justo, but still, most people relied on a restoration of civic liberties which, unfortunately, never materialized. Not only were the provincial elections a farce during President Justo's term of office, but the national polls were also little better than a parody, and the same applies to those in which President Ortiz was elected.

Dr. Ortiz's opponents often mention this fact in support of their doubts as to the sincerity of his democratic ideals, but so far the President of the Republic has offered more than one material proof that he is earnest in his efforts to ensure that the country is governed by its freely-elected representatives. The interventions in San Juan and Santiago del Estero were steps in this direction. These are mere skirmishes in comparison with the battle for electoral freedom which one day will have to be fought for electoral freedom.

The interests of parties and politicians are not alone at stake on the President's decision as to the Catamarca episode on which decision may depend whether the Argentine people is definitely to lose faith in its institutions or not.

Source: Press.

Lester Baker
Lester Baker, Col. Inf.,
Military Attaché.

Original & 5 copies airmailed Dec. 12th.

From M/A Argentina.

Report No. 6148.

December 11, 1939.